



**ADVOCATES  
FOR HIGHWAY  
AND AUTO SAFETY**

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## **AUTO SAFETY AGENCY RESPONSE TO CONGRESSIONAL MANDATE IS SIGNIFICANT STRIDE TOWARD CURBING BURGEONING ROLLOVER PROBLEM**

*Washington, D.C.* – Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety (Advocates) welcomed an announcement today by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) that electronic stability control (ESC) systems would be required on all passenger cars, SUVs, pickup trucks, minivans and buses weighing 10,000 pounds or less. In 2005, Congress ordered NHTSA to develop a stability standard to prevent rollover crashes that was “consistent with stability enhancing technologies,” in the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act, a Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU.)

Fatalities in rollover crashes have risen sharply throughout the 1990s due to changes in the vehicle fleet, particularly SUVs and pickup trucks, reaching the highest level ever in 2005, with 10,816 deaths. Studies have shown that stability control technology dramatically improves safety, especially in single-vehicle crashes. NHTSA’s own research shows that of ESC can reduce single-vehicle rollover crashes by up to 71 percent for cars and 84 percent for SUVs. Overall, the technology will reduce single-vehicle crashes of passenger cars by 34 percent, and of SUVs by 59 percent. Only three percent of all crashes involve rollover, but fatalities in these crashes comprise nearly one-third of all occupant deaths.

“There have been too many rollover deaths and too little government action, so it was necessary for Congress to step in,” said Judith Lee Stone, president of Advocates. In 1994 NHTSA halted its rulemaking on a rollover stability standard, and has taken little other action since then to address the problem, despite the surging numbers of SUVs and pickup trucks entering the vehicle fleet and the resulting rollover death epidemic. “NHTSA has issued a proposed rule that will solve a major piece of the rollover problem. This lifesaving technology has been in use in Europe and the U.S. for some time, but it takes this kind of rulemaking action to assure the systems will be provided as standard equipment on every vehicle sold in this country.”

While stability control technology is a major safety improvement, this step alone will not solve the entire rollover crash problem. ESC is not effective once the vehicle’s tires lose their grip on the road or when vehicles depart the roadway. Also, the systems are not as effective in multi-vehicle crashes.

“In order to address the rest of the rollover safety problem, NHTSA will have to consider other means of improving vehicle design stability and occupant protection,” Stone added.

Advocates played a major leadership role in securing adoption of the SAFETEA-LU provision that led to today's rollover stability rulemaking proposal, and leaders on the Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee and the House Energy and Commerce Committee who championed the SAFETEA-LU provision included Senator Ted Stevens (R-AK), Senator Trent Lott (R-MS), Senator Daniel K. Inouye (D-HI), Rep. Joe Barton (R-TX), Rep. Cliff Stearns (R-FL), Rep. John D. Dingell (D-MI) and Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL).

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*Advocates for Highway and Auto Safety is an alliance of consumer, health and safety groups and insurance companies and agents working together to make America's roads safer. Public Citizen is a national, nonprofit consumer advocacy organization. For more information, please visit [www.saferoads.org](http://www.saferoads.org) and [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org).*